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Committee on Conferences
Substantive session of 2002

Draft report

Addendum

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II. Calendar of conferences and meetings

C. Improved utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities

1. Meeting statistics of United Nations organs

Introduction and overview

1. At its 443rd meeting, on 9 September 2002, the Committee on Conferences reviewed statistical data contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/57/228) on the planned and actual utilization of conference resources allocated to a core sample of bodies that had met in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi in 2001. The data included compliance and availability indices for assessing compliance with the submission deadlines for pre-session documentation, and availability thereof.

2. In introducing the report, the Assistant Secretary-General for General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services made several cross-references to the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Improving the performance of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services" (A/57/289), which addressed documentation-related matters and policies.

Discussion

3. Concern was expressed about the loss of valuable conference resources as a result of late starts, early endings and cancellations of meetings. Unused resources could have been released instead for meetings of regional and other major groupings of Member States. Members concluded that the underutilization of resources was the result of poor planning, as some committees had a pattern of wasting significant

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amounts of their allotted time year after year, which seemed to suggest that their allocations were too high.

4. Note was taken that the standard three-hour blocks in which interpretation services were provided made it difficult to schedule meetings of shorter duration. It was pointed out that the three-hour blocks facilitated the reallocation of whole unused blocks; however, such reallocation required close cooperation of the bureaux and secretariats of bodies.

Conclusions and recommendations

5. **The Committee on Conferences noted with deep concern that the overall utilization factor at the four duty stations in 2001 had dropped six points below the benchmark of 80 per cent, with a 14 per cent drop in New York, which accounted for the overall decrease. The equivalent of 307 meetings, 921 hours, had not been utilized in 2001, even though the total number of meetings held at those duty stations had been 300 fewer than in 2000.**

6. **The Committee was of the view that the loss of resources was unacceptable. As a first step, meeting planners had examined the reasons for the loss of utilization and the Chairman of the Committee had conducted consultations with the chairpersons of bodies that had been underutilizing their resources for three years in a row. The secretariats and bureaux of those bodies had been urged to consider changes to their programme of work and to introduce discipline into the way they conducted their business. They had also been requested to work more closely with conference services and to adjust their programme of work based on previous patterns for recurring agenda items with a view to reducing waste.**